BLENDED SYSTEMS IN AUCTION

GOOD PLAYERS COMBINE BOTH THE RIVAL METHODS.

In Reach of a Game or Rubber They Go After It, if Not They Seek to Penalize Opponents—Hands Where It Is Wise to Wait for Further Information.

For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the terminology of cards it may be explained that a wooden game is one that has no life in it.

In the old whist days the long suitors played a wooden game. Every time they led a deuce it showed they had no five card suit and every time they led a plain suit it proved they did not hold five trumps. When they refused to ruff a doubtful trick it meant four trumps and every time they jumped in and ruffed second hand it meant only two trumps left, if any.

It took years of preaching based on the analysis of hundreds of wasted hands and the triumphant march of the short suit American team of Boston, under the leadership of Harry Ward, to convince people that the wooden game will not win at whist. That such a game should have been so long persisted in is a matter of astonishment, yet we see the same wooden uniformity creeping into the architecture of the average game of auction bridge.

In auction everything is in the bidding, comparatively little in the play. In these articles two systems have been explained. In one the declaration is made on every hand just as if the game were straight bridge and regardless of the position at the table or whether the bid is free or forced. In the other the player seeks information and plays safe with strong hands, but bids boldly on the weak ones.

Neither system is better than the other, nor should either be followed to the exclusion of the other. As in the manufacture of the best whiskey, the secret of success lies in judicious blending. The idea is to give to the bidding in auction the same variety that one gives to the betting in poker. Once let an adversary feel sure that he knows what you are bidding from and you are lost.

There are two fundamental principles which the player should have always before him. The first is governed by the score. If he is within reach of the game or rubber he should make a dash for it and never be afraid to take a moderate loss, but if he has no hope of going game and sees no danger of the other side getting there he should play for penalties in preference to points.

The second principle is governed by the cards held. If the declarer has a sure thing and is willing to play it without regard to what others hold or bid he should come right out with it, but if there are weak spots in it or if there is a choice between two calls he should sit tight until he finds out how the land lies.

The following distribution of the cards came up in a deal at the New York Bridge Whist Club, Z's cards being held by a very good player. The score was love all, rubber game.

With such cards as these Z does not care what his partner has nor what is against him. He wants neither information nor assistance. He bids one heart right off the bat and stands ready to advance it to two or even three in hearts to get the play.

Some players with such cards think it better to bid two tricks at once, so as to shut out informatory bids by the adversaries. That is the wooden game. What does Z care about the adversaries' informatory bids? It does not matter to him what they lead or how they play the hand. He is going to play the hand as a heart, but he is also going to get the contract as cheaply as he can.

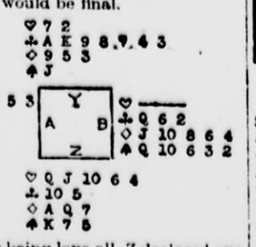
A bids two clubs, which with his guarded tricks in three suits, looks reasonably safe. Y doubles two clubs. He does not know just how strong his partner is in hearts, but he knows he can depend on Z for at least one sure trick in the suit. With four tricks in his own hand Y cannot see how A and B are going to win eight out of thirteen at clubs. B passes.

Could anything be prettier than the situation presented to Z? His partner says he has two probable stoppers in clubs and Z has two himself. By letting the double stand it is almost a certainty that the club contract will fail and that Y-Z will score some hundreds in penalties.

But the first principle that guides a good player is to go for game if it is reasonably within reach. If Y has two stoppers in clubs the game looks like a certainty in hearts, so Z ignores the opportunity to score heavily in penalties and overcalls the doubled clubs with two hearts, on which he wins four by cards and the rubber with ease, in spite of the fact that B trumps the first trick in clubs.

B led a small diamond, on which Z put the ace and led ace-jack of trumps, bringing them all down. A made his king of diamonds and led the ten of spades through Y. Y and B both played small and Z trumped, put dummy in with a club and got rid of his losing diamonds on the black suits.

Now, let us look at an example of a situation in which the player has not by any means a game hand. This was also played at the New York Bridge Whist Club, Z's cards being held by a player who does not believe in the auction system and always declares just as if he were the dealer in straight bridge and his declaration would be final.



The score being love all, Z declared one heart and A promptly passed. Y, with an idea that his partner might have a better chance to go game at no trumps, bid two clubs in order to show his great strength in that suit. B passed, and Z, who does not fancy the no trumper, returned to his own suit, calling two in hearts.

This A doubles, because now he has got Z where he wants him. No good player will double a one trick contract if there is any possibility of a shift. If Y goes four clubs he will have the time of his life making it, and if Z goes no trumps to escape the double A ought to be able to defeat the contract.

Z went two no trumps, trusting to his partner's club suit to carry him through, and B doubled, to show the stopper in clubs, which A cannot tell. A led a spade and Z tried to drop the clubs, which was very bad play, as he should have ducked the first round, keeping a club to lead to Y and still holding the two winning cards in Y's hand, as Y has no other reentry. This would have forced A to run with his two top hearts and then given his partner the spade, which would have saved one trick for Z, but not the contract.

As the hand was played Y led a diamond after failing to drop the clubs and lost the finesse. B made his spades and the club queen and then led the top diamond, A making two hearts at the end, setting the contract for three tricks and scoring 300 in penalties. Had Z let the contract stand at doubled hearts he would have lost 200. Had he played the no trumper well he would have lost only 200.

No auction player would call a heart on the first round with Z's cards, because he has no sure trick in the suit. That is a bridge declaration and the bridge player makes it because his declaration is final.

But this game is not bridge and the first call is not a make. The proper bid on Z's cards is one spade. He has no right to expect to go game in hearts with his hand unless his partner has something wonderful. The policy of the auction player, the blender, under such circumstances, is to lie low and feel his way cautiously, because there is nothing to be gained by making a declaration which cannot win the game at the score and there is everything to be lost if you have the cards that will stop the adversaries from going game if they declare. Contrast Z's position in this hand with that shown in the first hand given.

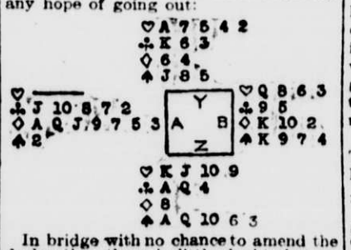
Although it has been repeatedly pointed out that the second hand should never overcall the dealer's spade with anything but a no trumper one finds players persisting in that error with the same pertinacity that they used to lead from five trumps at whist. If A calls one heart Y bids two clubs, B and Z both passing, A would naturally go on to two hearts and Z would double.

The result of the play would be that A would be the declarer in hearts instead of Z and that the contract would be set for two tricks, Y and Z getting 200 penalty instead of losing 200 or 300 on their own declaration.

If A is the declarer the play would probably find the second round of clubs forcing A, who would lead three rounds of trumps, hoping to find them more equally divided, B discarding two diamonds. Z's best chance to put his partner in would be to find him with the king of diamonds, so he would lead ace and small. When A returned a small spade Z would pick up A's trumps and make his diamond, the contract failing by two tricks.

It is not unusual for the player at auction to have the choice of two declarations with nothing to guide him as to which is the better. Sometimes it lies between the red suits, sometimes between a red suit and a no trumper. The bridge player makes his pick at once, just as if he would never have another chance. The auction player who blends the two systems carefully waits for a little more light on the situation before he decides and calls one spade.

Here is a hand played at the Knickerbocker Whist Club in which the dealer evidently thought there was no doubt about his declaration, although he was nothing up on the rubber game and there was nothing in his cards to justify any hope of going out:



In bridge with no chance to amend the declaration there is little doubt that no trumps is the proper call on Z's cards, taking a chance on the diamond suit. This is what Z did. A, a very shrewd player, passed and on the play he made seven diamond tricks, scoring 50 penalty against 30 aces.

This looks like a lost opportunity for A and B, as together they might have made a great score in diamonds, but analysis will show that had A bid diamonds he would have forced Z out of his no trumper at once and Y-Z would have gone game and rubber in hearts with four honors reduced.

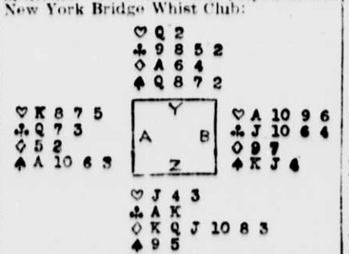
No auction player would call no trumps on Z's cards with such weakness as a singleton and three tenaces, all of which might be led through and killed. The proper opening call for Z is one spade. This will smoke A out. If A passes the black bid, as he should, Y will show his sure trick in hearts, denying any sure trick in the weaker suit, diamonds. B will pass and Z will accept the hint to play hearts as a safer call than no trumps.

Observe that if Y called a diamond, showing a sure trick or two in that suit, Z would shift to hearts himself, as it would begin to look like a chance to go game on the hand and he could go no trumps if he was doubled or overcalled.

Y's heart bid smokes A out and he declares two in diamonds, simply to protect himself now, as he is forced to do something to prevent the adversaries from having too easy a contract and a chance for game in hearts. Z bids two hearts, on the principle pointed out in a previous article that it is always to the advantage of a player to overcall when he can do so without bidding any greater number of tricks than his adversary offers.

A goes on to three diamonds and Z to three hearts, both being now forced calls, each player protecting himself from the other. A's call is the safer, as he can ruff two suits and has a five card suit to establish. On the theory of being in for a sheep as well as for a lamb A goes four diamonds and Z is forced to call four hearts, which he makes, winning the game and rubber, instead of losing 50 points in penalties on a doubtful no trumper.

Here is another example of the way in which a good player will think out a situation when he has a choice of declarations. This hand was played at the New York Bridge Whist Club:



The score was love all on the rubber game, and as it happened Z's side had quite a little advantage on the balance in penalties, which they did not wish to lose. Any bridge player would probably declare diamonds immediately on such cards as Z's, but your blender does not exactly see five by cards in this hand. At the same time he does not see any danger of the other side going out in anything, so he calls one spade.

A passes and Y shows his sure trick in diamonds. B bids one heart, which is a forced call just to push the others up a bit and show A what to lead if Z goes no trumps.

The information given by Y completely changes the aspect of Z's hand. The only sure trick Y can have in diamonds is the ace, and six solid diamond tricks and two in clubs look like game and rubber at no trumps if Y has a trick in either hearts or spades. Make diamonds trumps and the hand is still worth only three tricks. With his surplus of penalties Z can afford to take a chance, so he calls no trumps instead of two diamonds.

A led the hearts in response to his partner's heart bid, king first, hoping to find B with five of the suit. B shifted and led up to the weakness in clubs, which let Z in. After making six diamond tricks Z took in his jack of hearts and the best club, winning three by cards, game and rubber.

Had Z called a diamond in the first place A would have been forced to overcall with one heart unless he were satisfied to risk Z's failing to go game in diamonds, and Y would have said nothing, as he cannot stop hearts. The result would have been that Z would never have realized the possibilities of his hand as a no trumper and would have gone on to two in diamonds. With this declaration he would have stopped at 18, with 51 above for honors, but no more chance than his adversaries for eventually winning the rubber.

WHITEWASH BRUSH IN SPAIN.

Great Leveller of Distinctions Between the Rich and Poor.

From the Louisville Courier-Journal.

In Spain, where the ruins of Moorish towers are seen upon the crests of many hills as the "express" train crawls along at the rate of 15 or 20 miles an hour, the evidences of surviving Moorish influence upon the people and customs of Andalusia make an interesting study. In the city of Ronda it is plain that the ideas of home building which the Arabs brought into the Iberian peninsula remain vital to-day.

The whitewash brush is the great leveller of distinctions between the rich and the poor in Spain. The exteriors of homes, great manor houses upon the haciendas, huts of mountaineers clinging to the sides of the almost perpendicular hills, handsome homes of rich merchants in the cities and humble tenements are nearly all of plaster.

A few of them are kalsomined in blue or brown or pink, but the majority are pure white. Ronda is a white city with a few patches of blue and pink and looks as if the whitewash brush had just been applied.

Noteworthy Paintings in a London Exhibition

LONDON, April 12.—The International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers opened its eleventh annual exhibition with a more than ordinarily interesting collection of works by such artists as Rodin, Forain, Degas, Monet, Nicholson, Philpotts and Lavery. The society has flourished under Rodin's presidency and its present exhibition should reassure those who have feared that in time the exhibitions would inevitably become Anglicised and lose their Continental piquancy.

Perhaps the two most notable canvases, those at least which will attract most attention, are Lavery's joyous accomplishment, a full length portrait of Anna Pavlowa, the Russian dancer, and Glyn Philpotts's portrait of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Packe. The first is painted with a swift, sure abandon that makes the technique itself seem to express the illusive charm of the creature of grace and fire whom he has depicted. The action of the figure is superb and the color scheme with the russet leaves falling against a nebulous background and the limelight playing full on the fluttering draperies is as admirable as is his complete elimination of any line that might make more material the airy figure of Pavlowa.

Glyn Philpotts is a very young man, as his excellent self portrait "The Yellow Scarf" testifies, but he is a young man upon whom many hopes are centred. His work during the past year has attracted general attention and a brilliant future is predicted for him. In the self portrait his work has the solidity and dignity that have characterized his other canvases, but his portrait of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Packe, chic though it is, suggests too evidently the society portrait painter to please his more serious admirers. It will be one of the most popular pictures nevertheless.

Another notable picture of the year is Charles Ricketts's "The Plague." It is a large canvas in the place of honor in the centre gallery, but so badly lighted that it is difficult to see. It is a night piece, very dark and rich in coloring. The grouping is elaborately thought out and the central groping figure of the blind man is a poignant note.

There are few exhibits in sculpture. The most notable is Rodin's "The Eternal Idol," executed some fifteen years ago and one of the first of that series of emotional, tenderly modelled groups that have distinguished what is known as his second style. The surface treatment particularly in the figure of the kneeling youth presents the same suavity of modelling that characterizes his "La Danaide." He also contributes a small bronze mask, "Le Visage Emerveillé."

John Tweed, a former pupil of Rodin's, sends a study in marble, a nude recumbent female figure, and some interesting statuettes. There is a spirited bronze, "Artemis," by Bourdelle and another by B. F. Wells, a sketch for an "Athlete." Prince Paul Troubetzkoy has a hound, in bronze, as well as a portrait group, "Princess P. and Child," and Gladys Holman Hunt brings a reminder of the Pre-Raphaelites in her "Beatrice."

The work of William Orpen, who captured one of the prizes at the Carnegie exhibition last year, is well known in America. The canvas reproduced here, "The Knacker's Yard, Dublin", marks a new departure in his style. He has abandoned his small detailed interiors and his admirable still lifes to produce a broad, simple canvas with a Rembrantesque effect of massing.

In the group composed of Maurice Denis, Bonnard, Dufrenoy, Charles Guérin, Maxime Maufra and George d'Estagnat there are echoes of Post-Impressionism. Mr. Guérin's "Jardin Publique" is delightful in quality, as is "La Chambre Violette," by Maurice Denis.

Landscape is not strongly represented at the Grafton, though there is a fine work by A. D. Peppercorn, "The River," a sombre study of marsh and sky on a gray day. Other landscapes are "The Hills of Skye," by D. Y. Cameron, and a characteristic canvas, "Kensington Gardens, Autumn," by Prof. Herkomer.

James Pryde, whose earliest associations were with William Nicholson, when as the Beckerstaff Brothers they created a revolution in the poster art, demonstrates his strength in a scene of a vestibule whence four revellers are emerging in carnival garb. It is entitled "The Costume Ball." In the end gallery there is an unusually good display of etchings, lithographs and water colors. Joseph Pennell exhibits four of his new American lithographs, "Old Million Eyes," a sketch of a factory at evening; "Coal Breaker on the Susquehanna," remarkable for the splendid massing of its blacks; "Coal Breaker, Wilkesbarre," and "Shenandoah."

Forain has ten etchings and the brevity of his style was never more manifest. Especially fine are his "Danseuse dans la Loge" and "L'Amateur." E. J. Sullivan contributes ten of his late pen and ink drawings illustrating the "Sartor Resartus," more formal in design than his usual work. There is a charming water color by Roulet de Monval, "Départ pour la Promenade." A series of lithographs by Spencer Pryce should not be overlooked. He has a peculiar talent in depicting the workingman, and his "They That Go Up to the Merciful Town" is dramatic and convincing.

Taking the exhibition as a whole the smaller pictures, the etchings, lithographs, water colors and drawings are more successful than their larger and more pretentious neighbors.


ANNA PAVLOWA, BY J. LAVERY.


THE KNACKER'S YARD, DUBLIN, BY W. ORPEN.


THE HON. MRS. EDWARD PACKE, BY GLYN W. PHILPOTTS.


"THE PLAGUE" BY CHARLES RICKETTS.

THE PRICE OF HIS INHERITANCE

Another Man's Vengeance Worked When Dalton Got His Fourth Ace.

It was one thing to know Lew Gordon, and many people did know him, for he was the reputed proprietor of one of the most popular gambling houses west of the Alleghanies and east of the Rocky Mountains; it was quite another thing to know George Meredith, and very few did know him, for he kept himself mostly to himself, but Lew Gordon when he was not actively engaged in the pursuit of his profession was George Meredith.

The difference between being acquainted with Mr. Gordon and knowing Mr. Meredith was indeed so great that a friend of one of them who might have met the other would hardly have recognized him, though the two were one. He would have thought of the resemblance, no doubt, but the differences were great, for Gordon accentuated strongly the characteristic mannerisms of the professional gambler and Meredith was exceptionally reserved and seemed to shun the making of acquaintances, as indeed he did shun it.

He lived when he was at home in a pleasant country house a mile from the railroad and something like a hundred miles from the city of Cleveland, where Gordon's establishment was run. Mr. Meredith was married, so his neighbors assumed, to an extremely pretty young woman who had nothing to complain of in her circumstances except the frequent absences of her husband, who was understood to be a travelling man.

He visited his home as frequently as his business would allow and even spent days at a time in resting between trips, and it is to be presumed that Mrs. Meredith found something to interest her during his absences, she being of a lively disposition and given to making the most of any opportunity that might offer of brightening up her somewhat lonely life. At all events she seemed little troubled by the nature of Mr. Meredith's business and really knew little or nothing about it beyond the fact that it kept him away from home most of the time.

It was not to be expected that any one under these circumstances would notice the fact that Mr. Meredith's homecoming was invariably coincident with Mr. Gordon's absence from his place of business, but there were many who commented on the latter's carelessness in leaving his large interests under the control of a junior partner, especially in view of the nature of the business. Mr. Gordon, however, was give to self-indulgence and no one could criticise him for the frequent vacations he took.

Gordon being as well acquainted with the seamy side of life as a gentleman of his profession might be expected to be, it was natural enough that Meredith should feel some anxiety as to Mrs. Meredith's welfare during such times as he was away from home. Possibly on this account he made a private and exceedingly liberal allowance of extra wages to her single servant and through that domestic was made aware of much that did not happen under his personal observation.

One morning after leaving home and taking the train for Cleveland he seated himself in the smoking car and after lighting his cigar opened a note that had been slipped into his hand shortly before he had bade Mrs. Meredith his usual affectionate good-by. What he read in the note was enough to cause him to leave the train at a way station and tarry at a village hotel till nightfall. Then, hiring a team, he drove to a nook in the woods about a mile from his own house and tying the horses walked homeward, but stopped a little distance from the house.

Shortly after daybreak he returned to the nook in the woods and drove thence to the railroad. Nor was Mr. Meredith ever known to return home.

Late the following night Mr. Gordon had a confidential talk with Faxon, his managing partner.

"I've been noticing lately, Faxon," he said, "that the house generally loses money when I'm away."

"Well, it has happened two or three times," admitted Faxon, cautiously; "but——"

"Never mind," interrupted Gordon a little brusquely; "what's done's done, only I reckon I ought to stay around more. And Faxon, we've got to get in more new business. You haven't brought in much lately."

"We've got the best trade there is in town," said Faxon.

"I know, but there's a heap that we haven't got. I never see young Snead or Fullington or Crawford in the place, and there's Bill Dalton's cub, that good looking young fellow that's running after the girls all the time. They tell me he's rather a hot sport in his way, but he never comes here."

"Ain't likely to," said Faxon shortly, "the old man swears he'll cut him out of his will if he ever plays."

"That so?" inquired Gordon as if surprised, and an evil light gleamed from his eyes as he went on. "All the better chance of getting him. He's daredevil enough to hanker after forbidden fruit. Fish for him, Faxon; fish for him."

And after Faxon had promised to do his best and had gone home the gambler sat for a long time meditating. At last he said half aloud: "That'll do for a starter. There'll be ways of playing the hand out."

Mr. Faxon's exceptional ability as a fisher of men was what had secured for him an interest in Gordon's business, and as he was put on his mettle by the hint of distrust that had been given he exerted himself strongly to secure this new victim. After a time he succeeded, though not easily, and young Dalton not only put in an appearance in the gambling hell but was soon inoculated with the gambling fever.

Whether it was the proverbial luck of a beginner that favored him or whether there was some other operating cause did not appear, but for the first few times he played he was a winner. Gordon, who watched him keenly, seemed undisturbed even after the youngster cashed in several hundred dollars of velvet at the faro table the second week after he began.

"Luck's with you," he said, pleasantly, and Dalton chortled.

But the next time he lost, and the next and the next, and after a time he seemed feverish and troubled, and played desperately every night without recouping his losses.

"Hard luck," said Gordon, pleasantly, after one particularly disastrous sitting; "but it turned on you once. It'll turn again."

But it did not turn, and one night as Dalton arose from the table white and trembling Gordon said to him very quietly: "Do you want to play along? You might win out."

"I have no more money," said Dalton, bitterly.

"Your credit's good," said Gordon, and the other hesitated and went back to the table.

Later he signed a note for a considerable sum and lay awake for hours after reaching his bed. Yet the fever was strong enough to lead him on till the one note was multiplied by four or five.

Then when Gordon would have loaned him more the young fellow's honesty asserted itself. "I owe you more now than I have the means to pay," he said.

"That's bad," said Gordon, gravely, "but you have expectations, and I'm fond of long investments when they look good. I'll tell you what I'll do. Give me a post obit for the whole amount and I'll give you back the other notes and stake you for a game of poker to-night. You've played faro long enough. Maybe you'll do better at another game."

Then as Dalton hesitated he continued:

"I'll do better than that. Write me a note acknowledging that you've lost the money at play and make it payable three months after your father's death. Then you know as well as I do that it isn't collectible at law. You can do as you please about paying."

It did not sound like a taunt, the way he said it, but Dalton took it as such.

"Give me the money," he said. "Of course I'll pay. You ought to know it."

"Oh, I wasn't afraid of losing the money," said Gordon, and the note was given and the money passed.

There may have been more skilful players at the game of poker in the West than Gordon was, but none had settled in Cleveland, and even had Gordon been less dexterous in the manipulation of cards young Dalton would have had small chance against the four players who sat down with him.

At first he won, as if Gordon had determined to torture him to the utmost, but when he had piled his chips up to more than a thousand dollars worth and was beginning to think there was hope of retrieving his losses, Gordon dealt, and he found three aces in his hand.

It was his ante, and at first he feared that no one would come in against him, but the next two men stayed and the fourth player and Gordon dropped. Dalton raised confidently, but the next man raised him, and the third trailed.

Three aces were hardly enough, he thought, to go back again, so he stayed and called for two cards, the other man taking one.

When he found the fourth ace the confident hope came of making a killing, and as his antagonist made a heavy bet he boosted vigorously. Being raised again he shoved his whole stack forward and the other man called and showed a straight flush.

"I would have raised on the first round," he said, almost apologetically, "only I didn't want to drive the others out."

But Dalton did not hear him. He turned to Gordon appealingly, but seeing no compassion in his face he left the place.

The next morning Gordon indorsed the note over to George Meredith and put it in the hands of a lawyer for collection.

"Of course," said the latter, "you know this isn't worth the ink on the paper."

"I think it is," said Gordon grimly. "Present it to the old man."

It was paid, and when young Dalton received it from his father he knew, though his father said never a word, that he was disinherited. Moreover, he understood when he saw the indorsement for what he had been punished.

A little later Mrs. Meredith married a penniless man without waiting for a divorce, and the two sought the wilder country of the far West.